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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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THE FOOD ON YOUR TABLE

A Reason for Thanks. America's food supply, unequalled in abundance and quality anywhere on earth, has expanded 20 percent in the past decade, Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin said in a Thanksgiving Day message. "Today's agriculture is a unique combination -- many forces, many sciences, many talents, many cooperative programs of Government and farmers" he said. The Secretary noted that this abundant food supply makes possible for the Nation to "share with those less fortunate the vast bounty from farms, fields, and ranches"; that nourishing food has been provided to more Americans this year than at any time in history. Food assistance programs served more than 12 million of the Nation's poverty victims, a gain of 5 million since Thanksgiving, 1969, and child feeding programs now reach far more schools and related institutions than ever before, the Secretary said.

NEW TEST FOR LEAD POISONING

Permits Rapid Detection. A new test for screening children to detect victims of lead poisoning has been developed by chemists of the Connecticut State Agricultural Experiment Station. Present tests require a large input by doctors and technicians in the laboratory. With the new test, a sample can be taken by the mother, sent to the laboratory, and analyzed twice as rapidly as before. The new process was field tested by the Connecticut State Department of Health, which is now converting to the new method. Tragically, many victims of lead poisoning are children living in older houses in urban areas. Paint used years ago on these houses contained lead. Often the old lead paint is exposed as layers of newer paint peel. Children pick off the old paint and put it in their mouths. Details of the new detection method and the results of the field tests are scheduled to be published this month in Clinical Pediatrics, a professional journal. Additional information on the new method can be obtained from the Office of the Director, State Agricultural Experiment Station, Box 1106, New Haven, Connecticut 06504.



'TIS TREE TRIMMING TIME

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree.! Bright lights, glittering ornaments, and shining eyes -- the fun and joy of a Christmas tree. Choosing just the right tree to decorate is all part of the the festivities. More than a decade ago, USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service established U.S. grade standards for Christmas trees to help you make your selection. The grade standards require that a tree be: fresh with pliable needles that are firmly attached to branches; clean, at least moderately free of moss, lichen, vines, and other foreign matter; healthy, fresh and natural in appearance; well-trimmed, free of barren branches and smoothly cut at the butt. Specific requirements of each grade are: U.S. Premium—not less than medium density, normal taper, four faces (sides) free from any type of damage; U.S. No. 1 or U.S. Choice—not less than medium density, normal taper, and three damage-free faces; U.S. No. 2 or U.S. Standard—light or better density, "candlestick", normal, or flaring taper, at least two adjacent damage-free faces.

DECEMBER'S PLENTIFUL FOODS

Happy Holiday Choices. Whether you plan to serve traditional fare for the holidays-- or plan to start your own tradition, the December Plentiful Foods list has some mouth-watering ideas. The List includes fresh oranges, turkeys, pork, eggs, fresh apples, applesauce, apple juice, fresh cranberries, cranberry sauce, frozen orange juice concentrate, grapefruit, tangerines, potatoes, dry onions, and walnuts. For January the Plentifuls will be pork, applesauce, fresh oranges, frozen concentrated orange juice, canned orange juice, dry peas, fresh apples, apple juice, fresh grapefruit, canned grapefruit juice, onions, and potatoes.

CONTAINER TIPS

Vegetables--Canned and Frozen. Have you ever picked up a can of vegetables and noticed that it was bulging? If so, don't buy or use it. Bulged or swelled cans indicate spoilage. Small dents in cans do not harm the contents, but badly dented cans should be avoided. Frozen vegetable packages should be firm. Vegetables that have been defrosted should be used immediately to avoid loss of quality. If the package is limp, wet, or sweating (signs of defrosting), don't buy it. Also watch for packages stained by the contents. This may mean that the contents have been defrosted and refrozen at some time during the marketing process. Although the contents may be safe to eat, refrozen vegetables will not normally taste as good as freshly frozen vegetables. For more tips on canned and frozen vegetables, send a post card for the free pamphlet "How to Buy Canned and Frozen Vegetables" (HG-167) to Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

INDIAN WOMEN FORM ORGANIZATION

NAIWA. The North American Indian Women's Association (NAIWA) the first national organization of Indian women, was formed recently as an outgrowth of a national seminar. The seminar, held at Fort Collins, Colorado, was attended by 68 Indian women representing 42 tribes in 23 States. Goal of the new group is to work toward more stable home and communities and preservation of the culture of North American Indians. The seminar was sponsored by the U.S. societies of the Associated Country Women of the World in cooperation with the USDA's Extension Service, land-grant universities, the Country Women's Council of the U.S., the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the tribal councils.

FOOD PREVIEW FOR WINTER

Careful menu planning will hold down holiday meal costs. Food prices rose sharply earlier this year, but have edged down since August, and some favorite winter items are in abundant supply.

Begin with a citrus cup. Citrus crop is huge; harvest is on. Low-priced, high-quality oranges and grapefruit as well as other citrus fruits are abundant. Or, be fancy with shrimp cocktail. Shrimp supplies are large. Cranberries are also plentiful.

Main course choices. Maybe pork, turkey, beef. Turkey prices are near those of last winter, pork output is unusually heavy, and beef prices are only a little higher than last winter. Lamb and fresh fish cost more though.

Side dishes should be planned with care. Except for cabbage, onions, and potatoes, prices of most fresh, canned, and frozen vegetables will be slightly higher than last December.

Dessert will cost more, whether store-bought or home-made. Many noncitrus fruits, pecans, cheeses and other dairy products, sweets, baked goods, and beverages are up. Eggs are about the only lower-priced baking ingredient. But apples, citrus fruits, walnuts, almonds, and peanuts are in good supply.

Price Prospects. Food store prices for the fourth quarter are above late-1969 levels by a margin of only $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent, narrowing from a $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent margin for the first quarter this year. In the first half of 1971, prices will increase a little, staying within a percent or so of current levels. Small price increases for fish, dairy products, sugar and sweets, pastas and breads, and more substantial hikes for some fruits, vegetables, and beverages will nearly be canceled by price savings in meat, poultry, other food items.

Eating out is a different story. Restaurants, snack bars, and institutions raised prices $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent in 1970 to keep up with labor and overhead cost increases, as well as food price increases early in the year. Since prices may advance further during the first half of 1971, economists foresee more dampening of the eating-out boom.

Shopping Cart Cues. These supermarket developments are likely: Meat department features pork as prices continue well below early 1970. Beef prices go up slightly, but remain lower than last summer. Lamb prices are on the rise. Despite slightly lower supplies, broilers stay cheaper than last winter.

The dairy case is the site of higher prices--currently averaging $4\frac{1}{2}$ percent over 1969, and due to rise a little more before spring. However, egg prices will avoid their high marks of last winter, as supply stays larger.

Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables show many cost increases. Though ample in the first half of 1971, processed vegetable supplies will be somewhat smaller than the year before, and prices higher. Supplies of many processed fruits are down, too. But orange juice and other citrus products and processed apple products will be ample.

On produce counters, potatoes, onions, cabbage will be the low-priced leaders. But you'll see the usual seasonal markups on the tender winter vegetables. While fresh citrus fruit is attractively priced, prices of apples, grapes, pears, and cherries won't be as favorable as a year ago.

Tea Takes Off. Tea drinking, which rose sharply during the sixties, will continue upward in seventies due to popularity of instant tea products. We've about quit drinking tea prepared from loose leaves, but make more tea from bags, instant crystals, and mixes that combine tea, sugar, and flavorings. Prices of tea bags are no higher now than in 1960. Meanwhile, coffee prices have risen and consumption of coffee per person has declined.

CITIES AND TREES

Man's Best Friend Is. . . not his dog, but his tree! So says USDA's Forest Service. To back up that statement it has prepared a leaflet detailing the many benefits man receives from trees. For instance, we're aware that trees provide shade and beauty, but did you know that they dilute pollutants in the air by releasing oxygen? Or that they act as sound barriers to cut down on noise pollution? Or that decaying leaves replace minerals in the soil? In urban areas the benefits from trees often get overlooked. To assure successful tree planting under adverse city conditions, Forest Service scientists are searching throughout the world for tree strains that are resistant to attack by insects and diseases and that are hardy enough to withstand air pollution and people pressure. In addition, the Forest Service has established the Pinchot Institute of Environmental Forestry Research to focus on the needs of urban people. Copies of the leaflet, "Man's Best Friend, the Tree," and information on the new Pinchot Institute research program are both available from the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania 19082.

FOOD'S REAL VALUE

It's What In It That Counts. And over the years, the nutrient content is the health factor. For 1971, per capita supplies of calories, fat, and thiamin will rise, and vitamin A will decline. This is because we'll be using a little more meat, but less milk and sweet potatoes. Fractional diet shifts, the result of changed eating habits, add up over the years. We eat 5 percent more calories, 5 percent less calcium, 3 percent more ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and 2 percent less vitamin A than we did 12 years ago. Why? Our diets now include more vegetable fats, sugar, sweeteners, meat, citrus; less milk and green and yellow vegetables.

WHAT IS IN IT FOR YOU?

Nutritive Value of Foods. What are the nutrients in a glass of milk, a slice of cooked meat, an apple, a slice of bread? How much protein is recommended a day for a healthy 14-year-old? You can find the answers in the 1970 edition of "Nutritive Value of Foods," one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's most popular bulletins. The revised publication gives nutritive values for household measures of 615 foods; a table showing the yield of cooked meat; and a table showing the Recommended Dietary allowances for individuals from newborn infants to men and women 75 years and older. Foods are listed under 10 headings and values are shown for energy (calories), protein, fat, fatty acids, total carbohydrate, two minerals (calcium and iron) and five vitamins (A and C, thiamin, riboflavin, and niacin). The publication is prepared by nutritionists of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service for use by homemakers, teachers, dietitians, physicians, and other persons responsible for planning nutritionally adequate diets. Copies of "Nutritive Value of Foods," (HG-72) are available for 30 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please include your zipcode.